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**(More Than Just a Nice Guy Series): Depictions of Jesus in the Book of John
“Jesus is the Best Shepherd”, John 10:1-21**

In order to clarify further who He really is, Jesus compares Himself to a good shepherd in contrast to a bad shepherd (John 10:1-21). As a result of this word picture, the man healed from blindness and some of the Pharisees truly see His identity more clearly, and other Pharisees strongly resist him in their spiritual blindness (Jn.10:19-20). The blind are given sight and the seeing become blind (Jn.9:39). The “Good Shepherd” metaphor is life changing if we can truly “see” it with our mind, soul, and spirit.

I. Bad shepherds drive the sheep from behind...Good shepherds lead them from the front.

In contrast to bad shepherds who drive sheep from the rear with fear and pain, the good shepherd leads His sheep as they recognize His voice and follow Him (Jn.10:2-5). The Pharisees use fear, shame, threats, and insults to maintain their egos and control others. Jesus leads His sheep by love and compassion because He truly understands the brokenness of the world through His own life experiences.

II. Bad shepherds take away life...Good shepherds give it.

Bad shepherds see the flock as something for their own benefit, as they allow thieves to “steal and kill and destroy” (Jn.10:10). The good shepherd lies down in front of the gate, not only to protect the sheep, but to give them life “abundantly”/ “to the full” (Jn.10:10). As the Best Shepherd, Jesus is able to direct others to Him and points us to Himself, the source of all good things.

III. Bad shepherds run when times get tough...Good shepherds are willing to lay their life down for the sheep.

The bad shepherd, like the hired man, abandons the sheep when there is danger because he cares nothing for the sheep (Jn.10:12-13). Jesus declares Himself to be “the Good Shepherd” and is willing to give His life freely both to his flock and to those outside the pen [Gentiles] (Jn.10:14-18). In fact, He came for the expressed purpose of dying for the flock, bringing on the crucifixion to give abundant life (Jn.10:10).

Prayer: Like some of the Pharisees, we may be tempted to build our own kingdoms, or choose to run away from danger. But the good shepherd, the Best Shepherd, offers a better way in this broken world. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus comforts us, His sheep, with compassion for our imperfections, mercy for our failures, eternal security for our fears, and a life overflowing with fullness of His Kingdom here on earth. Are we following the Best Shepherd?

Discussion Questions:

1. Can you recognize in your life the difference between being driven (fear and pain) or being led (love and care)? Can you give current examples?
2. Are you growing more like Jesus, the Best Shepherd, who infuses others with His life of joy, hope, and peace? Or are you sucking the life out of others as you follow your own way?
3. Author Watchman Lee, once wrote that “The Normal Christian Life” is the abundant life where God’s Spirit works through us daily. Do you find this normal in your life?
4. Just what does an “abundant” life mean to you personally? Deep peace, prosperity....?
5. According to Jesus’ own words in John 10, who is responsible for the death of Jesus? Why is this important to know?

6. Read Exekiel 34:1-16 where God rejects bad shepherds and He Himself becomes the good shepherd. What qualities of the Lord God as good shepherd in Ezekiel are similar to those of the Lord Jesus as good shepherd in John 10? Does it strengthen your faith to know the Old Testament frequently points to the coming of Jesus?